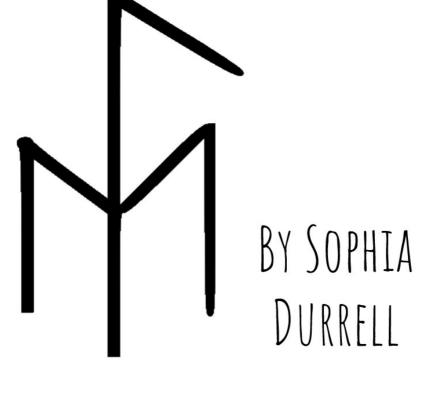


FRIGGA'S TABLE



We give thanks to the gods and goddesses, our ancestors,
To the earth, the sun and the rain
To the plants that grow and bear fruit
To the animals whose lives nourish our own
To the people whose work brings food to our table
To the loving hands that prepare our meals
These gifts we gratefully receive.

Hail!

Food is a necessity of life for us and all living beings. For most of our history, a majority of people's time, work and creativity was devoted to the procurement, production, preservation and preparation of food. Many of the most ancient deities and rituals of humankind are oriented around the need to eat, whether through hunting or cultivating the soil. The basis of traditional holiday celebrations feature the use of foods available at different times throughout the year. Before modern conveniences like refrigeration and industrial production and distribution came about, a good deal of a families, and a communities efforts were bound up in ensuring a sufficient supply of food, from planting to harvesting and preserving. Food can also be a great pleasure to prepare and enjoy. The act of eating together can generate bonds of kinship and shared experience. Most, if not all, cultures around the world have traditions and folkways built around the production and use of food with seasonal, religious, and medicinal applications.

The technological advances of our current age have made possible a food culture in the Western world based on convenience and massive quantities of cheap and easily consumed food, produced by a few corporations and relentlessly marketed around the globe. This situation is made possible by cutting production costs wherever possible and reliance on monoculture (one species of plant or animal bred or genetically modified to suit mass production needs: such breeds of plant or animal are often unable to exist in a natural state, and have characteristics that are unfavorable from a nutritional standpoint) to such an extent that the health of human consumers and the environment are compromised. Such a situation is symptomatic of our modern way of life, where so much of humanity is divorced from nature, and as a result, plagued by a polarized mindset. People's attitudes toward food tend to swing from one extreme to another: either careless consumption of ready-to-eat junk food that provides very little in the way of nourishment, but a great deal of stimulation through overuse of salt, sugar and artificial flavoring or an over-elaborate fetishization that seeks ever rarer, fancier and expensive ingredients and methods of preparation, or ideological rationalizations for whatever trendy diet is being promoted. Neither of these modes of thinking about, and using, food are healthy or practical for the average person or for a people in general, and the dire results are becoming more and more obvious.

In America, two-thirds of the population are overweight. Over half of this number are obese. Diseases resulting from a bad diet are prevalent in the population, requiring

expensive long-term medical care. Instead of governments stepping in to enforce regulation of the companies responsible for flooding the market with poisonous food, or indeed those corporations taking responsibility themselves, we get a boom in "fat-acceptance" propaganda. All this is very profitable for the medical industry and the makers of trendy plus-sized clothing, but it is a disaster for the health and well-being of a nation, and it is being passed on to our children. One could say: "Well, it's a free country, and if I want to eat this way, it is my right." Fine. But is it your right to deny your children the chance to choose a healthy and fit body to inhabit?

The long-lasting damage done by poor eating habits in childhood is proving to be severely detrimental to health as an adult. A great irony of the modern age is that there are now significant portions of our population who are starving themselves through a diet so large in quantity and so highly fattening and addictive, and yet so lacking in basic nutrients needed for basic health. There are many scientific studies that re-iterate the connection between good health and a well-balanced diet, as well as the wisdom of our ancestors, who understood the importance of wisely composed combinations of food using the produce of their lands. We have the potential as humans to have marvelous, beautiful, strong and highly-functional bodies, genetic gifts passed down through the struggles of our ancestors. Is the dubious pleasure of sugar addiction truly better than the gifts a healthy body can bestow throughout a lifetime? What legacy are we leaving our children? What burdens are we placing on our society?

In addition to the bad effects our modern food production system has on human health, there are environmental effects that must be considered. The mass monoculture of crops like soy, wheat and corn (generally one strain genetically modified to be resistant to pests or able to withstand dousing by pesticides) depletes the soil of nutrients, requiring the addition of mass amounts of chemical fertilizers that run off into the water supply. The coercive promotion of these types of crops to farmers destroys the diversity of plant varieties, and the nutritional benefits that go along with them. Mass production of animals for meat and eggs requires that the animals are raised in abominable conditions, fed cheap and unnutritious foods (if that term can be applied to the fillers such as cardboard, plastic pellets and the remains of animals deemed to sickly to go on the market as fit for human consumption) and kept alive on a steady regime of antibiotics until they go to slaughter. The waste stream from these massive meat production plants also contributes to water pollution. Additionally, disease spreads rampantly in such environments, resulting in the necessity of slaughtering thousands of animals. The antibiotics used to control such outbreaks end up in the food supply, contributing to the creation of antibiotic-resistant strains of disease.

Our food should not be something to fear or something that makes us sick. I would like to see food become important to us in a wholesome and healthy way, something that nourishes our bodies and souls, a tangible (and edible!) expression of love and community, something to care about and work for, not a cheap feel-good fix or empty marker of social status. Our governments, or the corporations that wield power over them and us are not going to make changes in our best interests that damage their profit-driven agendas. We must educate ourselves in order to choose and decide for ourselves and our children how we approach food and nutrition. By choosing to learn about our food, to plan and prepare our meals consciously, we are investing in our health and our future, and the health and future of our children, our neighbors and the earth

Finding Balance

Types of Food

Protein

Eggs, meat and seafood, dairy products, legumes, nuts and seeds.

Carbohydrates

Grains, fruits, starches (potatoes) and sugars

Vegetables

Fats

Oils, butter, lard, artificial fats

Salts, Spices and Flavorings

Balancing these types of food for optimal health has been a controversial topic for decades. The USDA Food Pyramid, with its heavy reliance on carbohydrates and shunning of fats has proven to be less than beneficial for the average American, although a profitable boon for the corn, wheat and soy industries. The new model is MyPlate, which is a somewhat better base to build a meal from. Children going through growth spurts may benefit from more healthy carbohydrates, while a diabetic or prediabetic would do better with a smaller portion of grains and fruit and a larger serving of vegetables and protein.

Food Safety and Quality

We hear a lot of conflicting things about the wholesomeness and safety of our food. It can be difficult to decide what to believe, and what to dismiss. Some basic guidelines can be helpful in making good decisions at the market.

Where Does Our Food Come From?

The American food system is controlled to a large extent by a few enormous corporations, in partnership with government entities that subsidize crops like corn, soy and wheat. Our meat and dairy is mostly produced in huge factory farms where animals are bred to produce massive quantities of meat, milk or eggs at the expense of their health

and ability to function as living creatures. These methods of producing food are intended to maximize food production at the lowest possible cost in dollars for the companies, but there are some very important problems with this way of producing food.

- 1. The massive monoculture crops funded by government subsidies are grown from seed developed to grow in soil saturated with weed killer. The constant use of the soil to grow the same crops over and over depletes the soil of nutrients. Instead of allowing the soil to rest, or using natural methods of soil regeneration, more harsh chemical fertilizers are applied until the soil can give no more, resulting in dead and wasted land.
- 2. The use of one type of hybrid crop, bred for pest resistance rather than for nutritive value, for most of the food produced and sold in our nation leads to nutritive deficiency and health problems. The rise of gluten sensitivity and IBS in our population can be correlated with the rise of GMO wheat designed to kill insects by causing their digestive tracts to rupture being used almost exclusively for mass-produced bread, flour, pasta, cereal, animal feed and snacks.
- 3. The concentration of so much power and influence over food, a necessity of life, in a few corporations gives too much power to a small group of people who may not have our best interests at heart. Monsanto, a corporation that creates pesticides as well as GMO wheat, corn and seeds has been known to sue small farmers for growing their patented seed by accident. This is the company that brought us DDT and Agent Orange.
- 4. Mass production can lead to mass collapse. Diseases that get a foothold in one large factory can be quickly spread out across the country. There are many examples of this, from E. coli in spinach, to Listeria in ice cream, to avian flu outbreaks that kill egg-producing chickens kept in unhealthy conditions by droves.
- 5. Mass-produced food is designed to have a long shelf life. That is why so many canned or boxed items are full of salt, sugar and artificial preservatives. Such food is often stripped of nutrients, which after all provide the life-giving benefits of food, and as such, are vulnerable to decay. What is left is empty, often stale filler, which is rendered palatable by the addition of salt, sugar and artificial flavorings.

All of this sounds pretty bad. What can be done about it? A person on a limited income with a family to feed is going to be concerned first and foremost with getting food, and there are many options marketed to us as being fast, cheap and easy, but a look at the costs of a fast-food diet versus a homemade meal plan show both immediate and long term differences. An occasional meal at McDonalds will probably not kill anyone, but a steady diet of junk food will result in sub-par health of the body and the wallet. Fortunately, there are ways to provide good food for yourself and your loved ones on a

budget. It takes a little work, a little forethought and some time, but it can be done.

Basic Skills and Equipment

For the purposes of this pamphlet, it will be generally assumed that the reader has access to a stove, refrigeration and a source of electricity. A good basic kitchen arsenal should consist of:

A frying pan, ideally of cast iron. Cast iron is sturdy and long-lasting and reasonably priced. Cast iron that has a little rust on it can be rehabilitated with some scrubbing and re-seasoning.

A large pot with a lid, also of cast iron, plain of with an enameled finish, can go from the stove to the oven, or the campfire!

One or two sauce pans of differing sizes, of stainless steel, enameled iron or glass.

A baking pan, bread pan, muffin tin and cookie sheet.

Mixing bowls

Measuring cups and spoons

Wooden spoons, a whisk and spatula.

Vegetable peeler

Cutting boards (ideally one for meats and one for other items)

Crock-pot

Cast-iron, glass or stainless steel are my preferences for cookware. Care must be taken to dry cast iron fully to prevent rust. If a little rust forms, it can be scrubbed away with olive oil and salt. Aluminum is known to leach toxic particles into food, and the same goes for Teflon coated stuff, especially if it gets scratched. If you must use cookware with a coating, find something that has not been scratched and do not use sharp metal utensils (forks, knives) that can damage the coating. The problem of food sticking to pans can be reduced or eliminated by proper cooking procedure. Good quality iron or steel is sturdy and can last a lifetime. It is not too expensive to buy cast-iron cookware. A careful look through thrift stores can turn up treasures. The thrift stores in more prosperous areas of town often have a better selection of merchandise, well worth going out of one's way for. I like Pyrex baking pans and pots, but there is the danger of breakage to consider. Wooden or silicon utensils are less reactive than plastic, although I find plastic spatulas to be the best for pancake and eggs. Don't allow plastic utensils to be exposed to heat for longer than absolutely necessary.

Using your tools

It is unfortunate that Home Economics and Shop classes have fallen out of favor. We have far too many young (and not so young) people who don't know how to cook at all and take pride in the fact. It can be discouraging to attempt a recipe and fail, simply because one does not know some basic skills.\

Frying an egg: heat up a slice of butter in your frying pan, on full heat. When the butter has melted and is sizzling, swish the pan around to coat the entire cooking surface

and add your eggs. For scrambled eggs, crack the eggs into a bowl and whisk with a fork, then add to the pan. Otherwise, simply crack them into the pan. When the eggs are cooked enough to slide a spatula all the way under to the center, you can flip them over and cook until the yolks are the desired firmness. Runny eggs will need only a few seconds.

Boiling: Water or other liquid is boiling when bubbles and steam rise to the surface. Simmering is small bubbles, while a full or rolling boil is big bubbles. Many recipes call for something to be brought to a full boil and then simmered. This means bringing the food in question to a full rolling boil over high heat, and then lowering the heat to keep the food heated without overcooking and burning. Burnt food is often the result of too much liquid being allowed to evaporate by keeping the temperature too high and the pot uncovered, or not stirring enough, causing the food on the bottom of the pot to become overheated.

Cleaning produce: Unless produce is labeled organic, it is likely that it has come in contact with some form of pesticide. While possibly not harmful in small doses, over time pesticides can build up in the body and cause problems. It is especially important to reduce the amount of pesticides in food provided to children, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. Because children are smaller, pesticide exposure can build up faster. You can reduce the amount of pesticide ingested by cleaning and/or peeling produce, and purchasing organic food when possible. Washing produce is good practice even for organics, since there is still the possibility of germs such as E. coli being present on the food. Soaking produce in a solution of white vinegar and water for 15 minutes and then rinsing is a good and easy way to clean it. This will also remove the waxes and finishes used to improve the appearance of produce. Peeling produce may be wise for those who are very concerned about the presence of pesticides in their food, but it is worth keeping in mind that the peels also provide a great deal of nutritional value. It may be worthwhile to seek out organic versions of such foods (apples, carrots, potatoes).

Cutting and peeling: A vegetable peeler is very useful for quickly peeling fruits and vegetables. It can also be used to create long, ribbon-like strips of carrot, zucchini or cucumber for salads, soups and noodle bowls. A good sharp knife is indispensable for preparing food. A large knife with a broad blade and a pointed end is good for most tasks. A Nakiri blade knife with a squared-off end is also useful, and very good for chopping meat. If you make homemade bread, a bread knife is essential.

When cutting, make sure that you keep a secure hold on your blade with your dominant hand, and secure the food you are cutting with the other. By keeping the tip of the blade in contact with the cutting board, you can slice food quickly using a rocking motion of the hand.

Cutting boards should be cleaned immediately after use. To avoid cross-contamination, plan your meal preparation so that all vegetables and fruits are sliced before your meats. You don't want blood or bacteria from meat on your salad veggies! If possible, try to have separate boards for meats and vegetables, or seek out a reversible cutting board.

Meal Planning

Successfully preparing meals at home requires a little bit of forethought and planning, especially when there is not an adult able to stay at home and devote a good deal of time to cooking. It may be best to gradually shift over to a home-cooked meal program, aiming to cook one meal a day at home for a week or two and working up to more. Consider making one meal a week a vegetarian based meal, using eggs, cheese or beans and rice to provide protein. For example:

Sunday evening: Soak beans for Monday's meal.

Monday: Cook beans on the stove or in a crock-pot. Prepare a double portion of rice and a tossed salad.

Tuesday: Cook leftover rice with cheese and chile. Fry up ground beef and heat up tortillas for tacos. Serve leftover beans and salad alongside.

Wednesday: Ground beef, onion, mushrooms, spinach, garlic and tomato paste in the crock pot for pasta sauce. Cook pasta and serve with cheese and salad. Freeze leftover pasta sauce. Prep meat and veggies for tomorrow.

Thursday: Chop and boil potatoes. Mash or process in a blender with butter, salt, pepper and cream or milk. Cook bell peppers and onion sliced into strips in cast iron pot, add sliced steak and seasoning. When cooked, add catsup and wine or Worcestershire sauce and simmer with lid on. Boil water and cook frozen peas and pearl onions. Serve with butter, salt, pepper, a touch of sugar and mint.

Friday: Prepare rice or noodles. Stir fry carrots, broccoli, onion, kale, garlic and sliced chicken, beef or pork. Add a sauce made of soy sauce, garlic, plum, apple or peach jelly and lemon juice, as well as any left-over meat or veggies from last night. Soak barley for next day.

Saturday: Roast whole chicken. Cook barley. Fry mushrooms in butter and mix with barley. Prepare fresh or frozen vegetables. Save leftover chicken and bones and put into crock pot with water, vegetable scraps, onion, carrot and celery.

Sunday: Using broth from crock pot and leftover chicken, make a stew, with chicken, sausage and shrimp, with tomato, okra and onion. Serve with rice or French bread and butter.

1 2lb bag of beans-1.97 1 5lb bag of rice - \$2.50 1 pack of 5 sausages - 5.00 Package of oregano- 1.00 2 lbs. ground beef- 8-10.00 Corn tortillas- under 2.00 Brick cheese- 3.00 Can chile (small) - 1.00 Large box salad greens- 5.00 Large bag of onions- 2.00 Tomatoes- 2-3.00 Tomato paste- 1.00 /can

Basics

Beans and rice

Beans and lentils are an inexpensive and healthy food that can be prepared in many ways. A well-stocked and frugal kitchen should have a supply of dried beans on hand, as well as canned beans for quick preparation. Beans and rice can be purchased in bulk and stored well in large plastic bins. When combined with grains like rice, wheat, barley or corn, they provide a complete protein, and make a good substitute or supplement for more expensive meat. Dried beans often require soaking, or a long cooking time. Lets' look at some things we can do with beans and other legumes.

<u>Split peas and lentils</u> have been used in cultures around the world as an inexpensive and healthy source of protein. They have the advantage of not needing to be soaked before use. Lentils will cook up faster than split peas, which need an hour to be at their best. There are many varieties of lentils to choose from. Red lentils will become mushy when cooked and can be used for thick stews. French green lentils will hold their shape better and can be served hot or in a cold salad.

Split Pea Soup is easy and delicious. If you do not have a lot of time for them to cook, pre-soak them in hot water earlier in the day or the night before. In a pot, heat some oil or butter and fry until soft one chopped onion, two sliced carrots, one sliced stalk of celery, salt, pepper, and a bay leaf. If desired, you can add other vegetables, like tomato, chopped potatoes or other root vegetables, like parsnips or turnips. If desired, you can add to taste meats, such as chopped ham, a sliced sausage or two, or a ham hock. When these are starting to smell good, add the peas and 6-8 cups of water or broth. Bring to a boil and then lower the temperature and allow the soup to simmer for an hour. Serve with French bread or corn bread.

Red Lentil Soup is a variation of split pea soup. Red lentils do not need soaking and will cook up faster. A can of tomatoes added to the broth can add flavor, as well as a squeeze of lemon or lime juice when serving.

French Lentils are not too common in many grocery stores, but can be bought cheaply in bulk from many health food stores. They can be cooked quickly in water or broth and served hot or cold, mixed with rice or vegetables. A large amount can be made and allowed to marinate in the refrigerator, for a lunch the next day.

Lentil Salad In a pot, combine 1 cup of lentils with 2 cups of water, bring to a boil and simmer until lentils are tender. Drain the water and place in a large bowl. Add chopped parsley, ½ cup chopped red onion, or green onion, 1 cup sliced carrots, raw or cooked, and a dressing made with ¾ cup olive oil, ½ cup lemon juice or red wine vinegar, salt and pepper, 1 clove of minced garlic and 1½ teaspoons of honey. Combine and serve immediately or after marinating overnight in the refrigerator.

<u>Dried and Canned beans</u> should both be on hand in the kitchen. Dried beans require soaking either overnight or a few hours beforehand in hot water; otherwise, they can be cooked in a slow cooker or on low heat on the stove all day. Traditionally, a pot of beans would be started in the morning and allowed to simmer all day. If you do this, be sure to check the level of the liquid in the pot, and stir occasionally to prevent burning. To help prevent the gas associated with eating beans, pick through your dried beans before soaking or cooking; remove any withered, broken or otherwise flawed beans, as well as any stones or debris. This is a good job for children to do.

Red Beans and Rice Traditionally made on Mondays, the washing day in Louisiana, the beans were started early in the day and allowed to simmer all day. The starchy water left over from the rice was used the next day for ironing. In a cast iron pot, add oil or butter and cook a chopped yellow or white onion, 2-3 cloves of chopped garlic, salt and pepper, ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper, a can of tomatoes and any meat (sliced sausage, ham, ham hocks or pickled pig's feet) desired. When the meat is browned and the vegetables soft, add the soaked beans and 6-8 cups of water. Bring to a boil and allow to boil for 10-15 minutes, then lower heat, cover and allow to simmer 1 to 1½ hour. Serve with rice (In a pot combine 1 cup of rice with 2 cups water, bring to boil, cover and simmer until all water is absorbed), bread and hot sauce!

Pinto Beans need soaking or a long cooking time. They can be flavored simply with salt, garlic and oregano, meats or cooked onion, greens (spinach, kale, collard greens) or red or green chile. Any leftover can be reheated and used to fill burritos, with cheese, egg, green chile or meat.

Mashed Bean Pastes are common in many cultures, most famously as bean dip, or hummus. Hummus is usually made with garbanzo beans (aka chickpeas), but can be made with white beans as well. One can of drained and rinsed garbanzo beans is blended or mashed with 1 cup of olive oil, ½ cup lemon juice or apple cider vinegar, salt, garlic to taste and ½ to 1 cup of tahini (sesame seed paste) or unsweetened peanut (or other nut) butter. Hummus can be served as a side dish with flat breads, flour tortillas, or vegetables for dipping, or as a spread for sandwiches.

3 Bean Salad is an easy vegetable dish that can be made from canned goods quickly and stored in a refrigerator for later use. Combine 1 can each of red kidney beans, garbanzo beans, green beans, black olives, and artichoke hearts, drained and rinsed. Add chopped raw red onion, parsley, grated carrot to taste and a dressing made with 1 cup olive oil, ½ to ¾ cup lemon juice or apple cider, balsamic or red wine vinegar, 1 tablespoon honey, oregano, salt and pepper. Serve at once or allow to marinade in refrigerator. Good for lunches and as a side dish.

Bean Salad Beans can also be added to a green salad for a protein boost. You can mix in carrots, onion, tomatoes, and a dressing of your choice. I like to use a simple mix of olive oil and balsamic vinegar, but ranch works as well.

Rice and Other Grains

While grains get a bad rap because of the overuse of GMO wheat in many of the foods on our grocery shelf, they can be a valuable addition to our diets. White rice is not very high in nutrients, but it is easy to prepare, and can store indefinitely, making it a good food to have a stash of for emergencies. Brown rice is more nutritious, but can go rancid (as most whole grains will over time, because they have not had their nutrients removed!) and takes more time to cook. Pearled barley has the same nutritive problems as white rice, but takes longer to cook. It is good to throw into a pot of soup. Unprocessed barley can be found at health food stores in bulk for a lower price than fancier grains, as can quinoa and steel cut oats. Whole grains can last longer if stored in the refrigerator. These grains benefit from a soaking before cooking, both to reduce cooking time and to release and remove chemical compounds in the grains that can irritate the digestive system. Quinoa has the additional benefit of being the only grain that has significant amounts of complete protein.

To cook white rice: Combine 1 cup rice and 2 cups water in a pot. Bring to a boil, and lower heat. Cover and simmer until water is absorbed, about 20 minutes. Add a tablespoon of butter if desired.

To cook brown rice or barley: Combine 1 cup of grain and two 1/2 cups of water. Bring to boil, cover and lower heat. Simmer until grain is tender, about 1 hour.

Oatmeal is a nourishing and healthy breakfast food. Rolled oats cook up quickly and are inexpensive. Buying the plain rolled oats and flavoring them yourself allows you to control the amount and type of sugars and other ingredients used. Cinnamon, butter, milk, dried or fresh fruits and honey, maple syrup or sugar can be added to taste. Steel-cut oats are heartier and retain more nutrients, but need to be soaked overnight, or cooked for a long time, not always convenient for the morning rush! You start them the night before in a small crock pot on low heat with plenty of liquid, and have them ready for you in the morning. Over-reliance on oatmeal can result in gas or constipation, so be sure to vary your breakfast options when possible, and drink plenty of water!

Quinoa can be soaked overnight and quickly cooked into a tasty breakfast cereal. Combine in a small pot, one cup soaked quinoa, one cup water or milk, some cinnamon, and dried fruit to taste. When done, grains will be chewy but tender. Add sweetener to taste.

As a matter of fact, any of these grains can be used for breakfast. A big batch could be cooked up and used for a hot breakfast cereal, combined with lentils or beans and vegetables for lunch, added to soups and stews for dinner. Boxed cold cereals are cheap, convenient and taste good because of the high sugar content and artificial flavors, but they are often made with stale grains that have had almost all nutrients removed in order to give them a long shelf life. If you can reduce your use of these products, you and your children will have a better start to the day.

Soups and Stews

Soups and stews are classic foods that can be simple to prepare and very healthy. They can make good use of foods on hand and provide balanced nutrition (combining meats or other proteins, vegetables and grains) in one bowl. A large batch of soup made in a crock pot can provide dinners and lunches to take to work or school (to be heated there or brought in a thermos), or frozen for later use.

Stocks and broths

The base of any good soup or stew is a stock. Stock is water boiled over low heat for a long period (at least a few hours) with seasoning, vegetables and often meat or bones. Using stock in place of water gives rich flavor to soups and adds much in the way of nutritional value. The use of bones in stock releases gelatin, which is extremely healthy for us. Stock is a good way to get use out of food scraps that might otherwise be thrown away. Save in a large freezer bag scraps left over from vegetables, such as carrot skins and tops, greens, onion skins and ends, and celery tops. Make sure that these are cleaned before freezing. Reusing these scraps can help offset the cost of organic foods. You can also save bones from chicken or other meats, or shells from seafood and fish heads, bones, etc. A large batch of stock can be made in a crock pot or a large pot on the stove, if someone will be at home to watch it. You can take it off the heat and refrigerate it, and reheat and continue cooking it if need be. When it is finished, you can use it right away in a soup, or to cook grains in, or freeze it for later use. There are pre-made and shelf stable stocks available, and they can be useful as backups, or for off the grid situations. Look for low-sodium options.

Chicken Stock can be made with the carcass left over from a whole chicken, or from bones from a fried chicken meal. In a large pot, heat some oil and cook your vegetables (for example, 2 chopped carrots, a rib of chopped celery, a chopped onion, tomato, garlic) with some salt and pepper and herbs to taste (I like bay leaf, parsley and oregano). Add your chicken carcass or bones and heat together. Add water to the pot to about 3 inches below the rim and a half cup of vinegar. Bring to a boil and then lower the heat and cover. Allow to cook for as long as desired, at least 3 hours. Skim off any scum or foam that rises to the surface and discard. A crock pot will allow you to safely cook the broth

unattended. When ready to use or store, strain and use or cool and store. Save any leftover meat for making chicken salad or enchiladas.

Beef or Pork Stock If you are using bones for your stock, it is best to begin by roasting them in the oven until they are browned. Alternately, you can blanch them by placing them in a pot of cold water and bringing them to boil, then discarding the water. Set the bones aside and heat oil in a pot to cook vegetables and spices as for chicken stock. Return the bones and any meat used to the pot, heat, add water and vinegar and bring to a boil. These stocks will take a longer time to be fully flavorful.

Seafood Stock can be made with fish carcasses (heads, bones and tails), shrimp shells, heads and tails, crab shells, crawfish shells or any combination of these. Dried shrimp can be found in Hispanic and Asian markets. Add these to a pot with vegetables and spices. Heat and add water and vinegar. Seafood stock cooks quickly, in about ½ to 1 hour.

Vegetable Stock can be made with any combination of vegetables.

So, what do we do with this stock? It can be used as the base for a wide variety of soups, from chicken noodle, to beef and barley stew to gumbo. It freezes well, so a large pot can be used for a meal immediately, and the leftover stock saved for later. Soups can be made with leftover meats, beans and vegetables, and grains or pasta can be added. Whole grains should be added at the start of cooking to allow maximum time to cook. White rice and pasta should be added towards the end of cooking because they take less time to cook. Meats should be browned (lightly pre-cooked in oil) before being added to stews to improve taste and tenderness. Below are a few recipes, but feel free to use your imagination and look for your own recipes!

Chicken and Sausage Gumbo

Prepare meat and vegetables: Chop one onion, one bell pepper and a bunch of green onions and set aside. Slice 1 lb. sausage (andouille, polish, Italian or smoked) and prepare chicken (either pieces or a whole chicken cut up). Chop two tomatoes, or use one can. Slice fresh okra (about 6, or to taste) or use ½ bag frozen)

In a large cast iron pot, heat ½ cup oil or butter and ½ cup flour, stirring constantly until the mixture becomes golden brown. Add the onions, bell pepper and green onion and cook until the vegetables become tender. Add salt, pepper, bay leaf, and cayenne pepper to taste. When the spices start to release their scent, add the meat. Allow the meat to brown (the outside will change color) and add the tomatoes and okra. Cook until all ingredients are heated, and add 6-8 cups of chicken or seafood broth. Bring to a boil, the simmer covered over low heat for 1 hour. If using seafood, add it near the end of the cooking time, as it takes much less time to cook fully. Serve with rice.

Coconut Curry Soup

This soup can be made using leftover chicken or pre-cooked chicken breast or thighs. In a cast-iron pot heat the meat (if using raw chicken, cook it fully at this point) with a tablespoon of coconut or sesame oil. Add one diced onion, one clove of garlic, a sliced

carrot, one sliced green onion, a teaspoon of curry powder, ginger and lemongrass, and salt and pepper. You can use premade curry paste as well. It may be found in Asian grocery stores or that section of the supermarket. It comes in green, red and yellow varieties. When all this is heated and becoming fragrant, add 4 cups of chicken or seafood broth and bring to a simmer. Add a can of unsweetened coconut milk and a can of chopped pineapple in juice (add the juice). Lower heat and put a lid on the pot and simmer for 20 minutes. If you like, you can add shrimp 10 minutes before serving. Allow them to cook until they turn pink. Before serving. Add some fresh sliced basil to the soup before serving. For those who like the flavor, a few splashes of Asian fish sauce go nicely in this soup. Serve with rice.

Meats and Eggs

Meat and eggs are good sources of protein. We have evolved to process meat as a part of our diets. While meats and, increasingly, eggs, have become more and more expensive, and quality is of concern, we should incorporate these foods into our diets. We can change our use of meats to use less and make more use of less expensive cuts. If organic eating is of importance to you, using cheaper cuts of meat is a good way to eat clean and healthy meat without putting too much strain on the food budget.

Some tips for shopping for meat:

Look for marked-down meats at the market. These can be purchased at a low price and then frozen. You can also buy meat in bulk, separate it into meal sized portions and freeze. The butcher at the grocery store should be able to do this for you. Ask!

Consider cheaper cuts of meat, like stew meats, which are tougher, but can be made into tasty stews. Browning them before cooking slowly will improve the texture of these meats.

Consider organ meats, such as liver, chicken gizzards and heart. These meats were formerly prized for their high vitamin contents. Liver can be very good when prepared correctly. Heart meat can be ground and mixed with ground beef for hamburgers, Texasstyle chili or meatballs. Chicken livers and gizzards can be chopped and fried, then combined with rice for a protein packed side dish.

Purchasing a whole chicken can be cheaper than paying for pre-trimmed and cut pieces. The neck and bones can be used to make stock.

It has become customary to regard meat as the largest and main portion of our meals. While some people thrive on a vegetarian diet, many people would do well to incorporate healthy meats into their diets. However it may be wise to reconsider the role meats play in our meal planning, and the quality of the meats used. For most meals, it can be more cost-effective and healthy to incorporate meats as a part of the whole meal, not the main event. Soups, stir fry dishes and casseroles are good "one-pot" meals that feature meat in

combination with vegetables, grains and other protein sources, such as eggs or beans. Using meat in smaller portions can help a family on a limited budget to purchase higher quality or organic meats more often.

Meatballs 1lb ground beef

1 lb. ground pork or Italian sausage. ½ cup bread or cracker crumbs

Salt, pepper, seasoning to taste

Mix together and form balls (about 1 ½ inches across). Let the balls sit in the refrigerator for at least ½ hour to set. Bake for 20 minutes at 400 degrees. This recipe should make enough to feed four people and to freeze for another serving for four people. These can be added to a pasta sauce for spaghetti and meatballs, or cooked with a can of cream of mushroom soup heated with cooked onions, a chopped tomato and seasonings (salt, pepper, nutmeg, onion powder) for Swedish meatballs. They can also be added to soups. These meatballs can be flattened, coated in bread of cracker crumbs and fried in olive oil. Serve these with rice and/or hummus and a salad.

Sweet and spicy liver and onions

Chop one large onion, one red bell pepper, garlic clove to taste and two tomatoes. Set aside. Cut up one lb. calf liver into chunks. In a pot, heat oil and cook the vegetables until soft. Add I tsp curry powder or garam masala, ½ teaspoon ginger, and one teaspoon turmeric. Heat spice and vegetables together and add liver. Heat and add ¼ cup pepper or apple jelly. Cook over medium-low heat until liver in fully cooked, about 15 minutes. Serve with rice, a squeeze of lime juice and chipotle peppers.

Stir Fry

Asian-style stir fry dishes can be a good way to make a complete meal very quickly. You can use 1 lb of any type of meat or a combination of meats, sliced into thin strips, which cook up quickly. Good vegetables to add to a stir fry are bell peppers, carrots, onion, garlic, broccoli, snow peas, bean sprouts and green beans. Slice these into strips or thin discs or chunks. Cook the vegetables first. When they are becoming tender, add the meat. An egg or two can be added toward the end of cooking to add extra protein. Stir fries can be served over rice or noodles. Store bought sauces can be used, or you can make your own. My go-to sauce is as follows:

½ cup soy sauce
2 clove chopped garlic
Juice of one lemon
Honey or sugar to taste (about 1 tablespoon) or
¾ cup plum jelly or preserves (optional)

Heat these together in a small saucepot, until heated and releasing scent. Add to the stir-

fry after the meat has started to cook. Hot sauce can be added as well.

Roasted Meats Roasting large portions of beef, chicken or pork can provide a hearty portion of meat for dinner. Roasting the meat with vegetables such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, carrots or squash can make a complete dinner. The leftover meat can be used in sandwiches, either in slices or ground with mayonnaise and relish as a spread.

Roast Pork Loin

Peel 8 cloves of garlic and place in the bottom of a baking pan in two rows. Take a pork loin and spread it with plum, apple or apricot jelly mixed with soy sauce. Wrap this in strips of bacon and place atop the rows of garlic. Bake in an oven at 400 degrees for about 30 minutes. This makes a delicious dinner with mashed potatoes and green peas. The leftovers make great sandwiches, or an addition to a stir fry.

Seafood

Seafood is extremely healthy for us, but can be very expensive. You can look for sales and markdowns on fish, shrimp and crab and freeze it. Oysters can be frozen if they are covered in water in the container used to freeze them. Look for recipes that use seafood as part of a whole dish, not the main centerpiece (for example gumbos and stews, jambalayas or stir-fry meals where seafood can be part of the protein makeup, along with chicken and/or sausage. Tuna, salmon and mackerel can be found canned and made into salads or spreads for sandwiches when mixed with mayonnaise and chopped pickles, celery and onion. Tuna and salmon can be mixed with bread or cracker crumbs, made into patties and fried for tuna or salmon burgers.

Eggs for Dinner

Eggs can be a good option for dinner, cooked with vegetables, cheese or leftover meat. The original Spanish *torta* was an egg-based dish, something like a simplified omelet. The basic technique is to cook in a cast-iron frying pan whatever combination of vegetables and/or meat available in oil. Good combinations are spinach, onion and tomato, kale, bell pepper and ham, diced potato (canned potatoes cook up faster) and green chile). While these are cooking, break 6-8 eggs into a bowl, add a splash of milk and beat lightly. Cottage cheese (about ¾) cup can be added. When the vegetables are cooked, pour the egg mixture over them and cook until solid. By using the spatula to lift the torta and allow the runny top to seep down to the bottom of the pan, cooking time can be reduced. Shredded cheese can be sprinkled over the top. While this is cooking, heat the oven to Broil. When the torta is solid throughout (can be lifted with the spatula in the middle, place the pan in the oven and allow to bake for 5-7 minutes, until the top is solid. Serve with bread and salad, and salsa.

Eggs can also be baked or poached in a cast iron pan with dark greens (spinach,

collard greens, chard, kale) with onions and spices. Cook up the onions and greens with a bit of butter and crack the eggs into it. Cook this on the stove, or bake it for 10 minutes, or until done. You can add chopped ham or cheese to this for a very nutritious and tasty power lunch or dinner. You can also heat canned tomatoes and red chile sauce in a pan and poach eggs in this mixture, adding cheese to the top and serving with potatoes, beans and rice. Eggs broken into a bowl and beaten with a little milk can be poured over a mixture of bread crumbs, or chunks of stale bread, cheese and vegetables and baked for a tasty casserole.

Boiled eggs are great for a snack or quick breakfast. They can be sliced and added to salads, sandwich spreads and casseroles. Eggs can be eaten safely for about three weeks past the sell-by date (do a sniff test first!), and older eggs tend to be better for boiling. As they age, eggs dehydrate. A drier egg, when boiled, does not adhere to the shell as much as a fresh one, making them easier to peel. If you find eggs at the store that are marked down because the sell-by date is at hand, buy them and boil a bunch to have on hand for quick breakfasts and snacks. You may find it a good idea to mark the boiled eggs to avoid mistakes.

Vegetables and Fruit

Vegetables are a key part of our diet. We can live fully off of a vegetarian diet far more easily than a fully animal based diet. A balanced diet heavy in vegetables is more ideal for most of us, however. Too many of us have been conditioned into disliking vegetables, to our detriment. Raw vegetables are a healthy and inexpensive snack and a key part of a nutritious and well-balanced diet, and can be prepared in many tasty ways.

Some tips on buying vegetables:

Fresh vegetables re generally best. However there are other options, especially important for the times of the year when fresh produce is less available and, therefore, more expensive. Frozen vegetables are frozen at the very peak of freshness, and retain much of their nutritional value. Avoid the products with artificially flavored sauces in favor of the simple vegetables. Peas, corn, pearl onions, green beans and carrots are especially good. Canned vegetables are usually packed in salty water and not as good nutritionally or taste-wise, but it is wise to keep a stock of these in case of emergencies. Some canned products are very useful, like canned potatoes, tomatoes (chopped or as paste), beans and artichoke hearts. Drain these and rinse in water before use to get rid of excess salt, or look for brands that have no salt or weird preservatives.

Canned fruit is often packed in sugar syrup which adds too much sugar for a healthy diet. Look for fruit packed in fruit juice instead. I do not feel that artificial sweeteners are much better than sugar. Canned peaches, apricots and pineapple can be found packed in fruit juice. Peaches and apricots can be used for baking, cooked in a pan as a topping for breakfast foods (French toast, pancakes or waffles) or served with some milk, cream, yogurt or cottage cheese for a dessert. Canned pineapple can be used to add

flavor to stir fry dishes or curry soups, or to flavor hams.

Look around or ask your produce department for discount produce on sale. There may be a bin for imperfect or overripe produce. Often there are good buys to be found there, with maybe a bruise here or there that needs to be removed. Such produce can be cooked in stews or for stocks, roasted, or trimmed and frozen for later use. Some groceries may be willing to give you produce that would be discarded, if you tell them it is for compost or feeding animals. Much of what is discarded is safe and edible, if used promptly and carefully cleaned.

Try to minimize what you throw away. Make a meal plan for a week and base your shopping off of that. If you find a good price on a large quantity of some type of produce, have a plan for using it. A large bag of tomatoes that are a bit over-ripe (soft, not moldy!) can be cooked down and stored in freezer bags to make spaghetti sauce. Overripe bananas can be mashed and frozen until there is enough to use for making muffins or banana bread. Scraps and leftover veggies can be saved in the freezer for making stocks. Don't waste money buying more food than you will use or can store!

Buy in season. When fruits and vegetables are in season, they are cheaper. For instance strawberries are cheaper in June than they are in January. Asparagus is cheap in March and expensive in October.

Preparing Vegetables

There are many ways to prepare vegetables. It is best to choose methods of preparation that preserve as much of the nutritional content of vegetables as possible. Boiling vegetables causes much of the vitamin content to be lost, unless you are making a stock that will contain the essence of its ingredients. Steaming, blanching, lightly frying or roasting preserves more of the beneficial elements of the vegetables.

Steaming is achieved by placing the vegetables in a steamer basket (or a strainer) which is placed over a pot with a small amount of water brought to a rapid boil, and covered. The vegetables will become brighter in color and tender when done. It is best to cut the vegetables into slices first to make cooking go faster. Best for vegetables such as asparagus, carrots, green beans, cob corn and broccoli.

Blanching involves rapidly cooking vegetables in already boiling water. Like steaming, the vegetables will become brighter in color and tender when ready. This is good for preparing frozen raw vegetables like peas, corn, carrots and green beans.

Pan-frying is cooking vegetables in oil in a frying pan. It is best to slice vegetables into fairly thin pieces or cubes, in order to speed up cooking time. This is done

as preparation before vegetable go into stews, or for stir-fry dishes. Good for onions, carrot, summer squash, celery, green beans, broccoli, corn, bean sprouts, spinach, kale and other greens, okra, bell pepper and potatoes (sliced, cubed or shredded).

Roasting or **Baking** refers to cooking in an oven. Baked or roasted veggies can be prepared on their own or surrounding a roast chicken or cut of meat. Vegetables prepared this way soak up flavor from the meat's juices. Good vegetables to roast are carrots, parsnips, turnips, beets, onions, garlic, potatoes and sweet potatoes.

Common vegetables and fruits (and what to do with them)

Apples are now available in many varieties. Organic apples are often more available and affordable than other organic products, and may be a wise buy if you are concerned about pesticides. Apples can be peeled before use to reduce pesticide exposure. They make a good snack for children and adults, and can be chopped and added to salads (green salads with apples, cheese, raw onion and nuts are a good lunch) or coleslaws. Apples can be added to a baking dish or roasting pan as an accompaniment to pork. They can also be used in muffins or fruit breads. Tart green apples (Granny Smith) are best for baking.

Asparagus is most available and affordable in the spring. It can be steamed or blanched and served with butter and salt, or a marinade of honey, cider vinegar, chopped onion and garlic. Leftover asparagus can be added to stir-fries or cooked in a omelet with cheese.

Avocados are best bought when tender to the touch (not mushy). They can be mashed with sour cream or yogurt, lemon juice, onion, garlic and chopped tomatoes to make guacamole, or sliced to add to salads or sandwiches. They will turn brown quickly, so they should be used soon after you cut them.

Beets can be shredded raw into salads, or roasted in an oven for 1 ½ to 2 hours in a 300 degree oven. The greens can be washed, chopped and added to stews, or fried in butter with onion and garlic.

Cabbage is usually cheap and very healthy. It can be used for salads, stews, stuffed with meat for a main dish or added to stir-fry dishes. There are several varieties, white, red and napa cabbage as wellas asian varieties like bok choy.

German red cabbage: Shred a head of red cabbage and slice a yellow onion and 2 clove of garlic. In a large pot, heat oil and add the onion and allow to cook until starting to soften. Add the shredded cabbage and garlic and ¼ to ½ cup balsamic or red wine vinegar (cider or white vinegar can also be used, but may need a bit more sugar to sweeten). Season with salt and pepper, cloves and caraway seeds. Stir and simmer until tender (about 20 minutes to ½ hour). 1-3 tablespoons sugar can be added. You can also add chopped apple or orange or lemon rind. Serve warm with potatoes and roasted meat.

Coleslaw can be made with white (green) cabbage shredded with onion and carrots. Apple can be added too. It is marinated in either a mayonnaise based dressing or a sweet

vinegar, oil and honey dressing. Heating the vinegar, oil and honey mixture before pouring it over the vegetables will help it to absorb faster. Napa Cabbage or bok choy can be chopped with some onion and marinated in a dressing of sesame oil, lemon juice, vinegar, garlic, ginger and red chili for an Asian style version.

Cabbage Rolls: can be made in an oven, a cast iron pot or a crock pot. A white cabbage is cored and the leaves separated. Cut two slits in the center forming a v shaped notch. This will make rolling the leaves easier. Fill the cabbage with a mixtures of cooked ground meat, onion, raisins and seasonings, and roll. Secure with wooden toothpicks. Place these rolls into the cooking pot of choice and cover with canned chopped tomatoes. Bring to boil and lower heat, cover the pot. Allow to cook for 1 hour. Alternatively, you could simply layer he cabbage leaves, meat and sauce in a baking dish (start with a layer of tomato sauce in the bottom of the dish) like a lasagna or enchilada. You can vary the seasonings and sauce to your taste.

Carrots are another product that is affordable to buy organic. They are used in making stocks and stews, and are good for snacks, especially dipped in peanut butter or ranch dressing. They can be roasted alongside meats. Sliced carrots can be cooked in butter and a little water, sweetened with honey. Shredded carrots (2 cups) can be mixed with ½ cup mayonnaise and ½ cup yogurt, raisins or dried cranberries, a can of diced pineapple and a touch of honey for a salad.

Cucumbers can be eaten raw or with salt, or a seasoning of lemon or lime juice and red chili powder. A Scandinavian style salad can be made with 1 sliced cucumber, 1 sliced onion, salt pepper, lots of fresh dill or a tablespoon of dill seed., and a dressing of either red wine vinegar, olive oil and honey, or sour cream or plain yogurt, lemon juice and honey.

Eggplant needs a little preparation to taste good. It should be sliced or diced and salted, and allowed to sit for an hour. Then it should be rinsed and all the moisture pressed out. This keeps it from being bitter. It can be fried, marinated in lemon juice, olive oil and cilantro and roasted, stewed with tomatoes, onion and zuchinni, or mixed with eggs, chunks of stale bread, tomatoes and greens, and baked with cheese on top.

Greens include beet tops, collard greens, mustard greens, spinach, kale and chard. These dark green leafy vegetables are very nutritious and can be pan fried in butter with onion and garlic for a side dish, added to stews and stir fries, or mixed with egg, chunks of bread and cottage cheese and baked. Greens need to be well washed to remove dirt and sand.

Green Beans often need to have the ends and strings removed. They can be cooked by steaming or blanching and served with a touch of salt and butter. Slicing them on the diagonal helps them to cook faster. They can be added to stir-fry or baked into casseroles.

Garlic is very good for us to eat. It is used as a seasoning mainly. Whole heads can be baked and the soft cloves spread on bread or mixed with butter for garlic bread. When

cooking with it, add it to the pot or pan after other vegetables have cooked down and before the meat or liquids are added. This keeps it from burning.

Leeks look like large green onions. They are good fried in butter with a touch of sugar, roasted with meats, or cooked in a pot until soft and bright colored, and then mixed with chicken or vegetable broth and cream for a soup. They need to be carefully cleaned by slitting them lengthwise and washing each layer, as dirt and sand gets trapped between the layers.

Lemons are used often for juice. Lemon juice can make good flavoring and salad dressing. Wash the lemons and remove the rind (the thin yellow outer layer of the peel) and store in a freezer bag. The lemon rind can be used as a seasoning for soups stews, vegetable dished and baked goods. Rolling the lemon under your hand along the countertop will help release more juice.

Lemon juice dressing Combine the juice of two lemons, a ½ cup of olive oil, salt, pepper, a chopped clove of garlic and ½ teaspoon of sugar in a bowl and add to a salad of lettuce, sliced radishes, tomato, sliced onion, sliced bell pepper and chopped pickle. This can be served fresh or allowed to marinate. Leftovers will be good the next day.

Lettuce There are lots of options for lettuces of the market today. The classic Iceberg lettuce has little to offer in terms of flavor or nutritional content. Look for red or dark green varieties, or mixes. Lettuce must be used fairly promptly, and washed well. It may be best to wash and separate heads of lettuce right away, and store in a large Ziploc bag or plastic container (you can reuse the plastic containers used to package salad mixes) with a few folded napkins to help absorb excess water. Since lettuce is eaten raw, the possibility of E. Coli being transferred is higher, so be sure to wash it well before eating.

Mushrooms can be sliced and fried in butter, salt and pepper and served with steaks or hamburgers, or mixed with rice or other vegetables. They can also be cooked and added to omelets. They need to be used quickly, so if you get a lot, it may be worthwhile to marinate them in olive oil and vinager. These can be cooked, or used in salads. A spread for bread can be made with softened butter, finely chopped mushrooms and chopped olives.

Onions are very important to have around. They serve as the flavor base for many recipes I prefer to use yellow onions. White onions have a stronger flavor and more potential to cause tears. Red onions are best used raw in salads and on sandwiches. Green onions are another good option for flavor bases for many foods, and can be chopped raw and added to salads. The skins and ends can be saved and used for stocks.

Parsnips look like big white carrots. They can be peeled and sliced and cooked in butter, a little water and a touch of sugar over low heat until tender. They can also be roasted and served that way. Leftovers can be mixed with potatoes and mashed.

Peas Frozen peas are packed at peak freshness and are therefore very tasty and preserve

much of their nutritive value. Add them to boiling water and cook just until heated through and bright green. Drain and return to the stove with a tablespoon of butter, salt pepper, ¼ tsp sugar and some fresh mint. Frozen pearl onions can be cooked with the peas as well. A pea salad can be made with cooked cold peas, ¼ cup of mayonnaise, chopped ham and diced white cheese.

Peppers Bell peppers can be stuffed with cooked ground meat tomato sauce and cheese and baked. Sliced bell peppers and onion can be fried with sliced steak and a sauce of tomato catsup, soy sauce and garlic, served with peas and mashed potatoes, or fried with sliced beef or chicken and served with flout tortillas as fajitas. Bell peppers, onions and potatoes can be fried together, and slices of polish sausage added.

Hot peppers (Jalapeno, Serrano, Guero) can be chopped and mixed with tomato, onion and lemon juice for fresh salsa. Removing the seeds with lower the heat. Use rubber gloves or wash your hands thoroughly after handling these peppers and be careful not to touch your (or anyone's) face or eyes.

Poblano chilis, Anaheim chiles or New Mexico green chiles can be stuffed, battered and fried. First roast the peppers in a 500 degree oven until the skins begin to blister. Remove and place in a plastic grocery bag to sweat until they are cool enough to handle. Peel off the thin, transparent and blackened outer layer and slit lengthwise. Remove the seeds and stuff the peppers with cooked chorizo sausage and cream cheese. Dip in beaten egg and then in flour and fry in a pan with a thick layer of hot oil over high heat. Fry until the batter is golden, and flip and cook the other side. Serve with refried beans, rice, salad and sour cream.

Potatoes can be baked in foil, roasted with meats, fried in lard or oil, boiled and mashed or shredded and made into patties and fried as hash browns. Leftovers can be used for breakfast as hash browns, or mixed with onions and eggs for an omelet. Mashed potatoes can be cooked with broth and cream for soup. Fried potatoes can be seasoned with rosemary or sage, salt and pepper. The skins contain most of the nutrients, and should be used. White "Idaho" potatoes are best for mashing and baking, yellow "Yukon Gold" are good for frying and mashing and red potatoes are good for roasting. Sometimes tiny fingerling potatoes in a mixture of colors are available. These are good roasted with pork or chicken.

Squash There are several types of squash, in two categories: summer and winter. Summer squashes include zucchini, yellow squash and crookneck. They have tender skins and can be eaten raw as a snack or added to a salad, or steamed and flavored with butter and dill. They can also be stewed with tomatoes, onions and eggplants. Zucchini can be shredded and made into bread or muffins, and frozen.

Winter squashes include acorn, Hubbard, pumpkins and butternut squashes. These have golden or yellow flesh and hard shells. They can be stored for a long time. They need to be roasted. The shells can be difficult to cut open, so be careful! They can be halved and placed cut side down on a baking dish with a bit of water and roasted until tender 1/2 to 1 hour. When ready, they can be sliced or mashed with butter as a side dish, or pureed with broth and cream or coconut milk for a soup. These squashes are good flavored with nutmeg, ginger or cinnamon.

Spaghetti squash can be cut in half and baked, cut side down in a pan with a little water in it at about 350 degrees until tender. When ready, you will be able o lift out the flesh in strands like spaghetti. This can be served with butter, or spaghetti sauce, for a low-carb substitute for pasta.

Sweet Potatoes need to be pricked in a few places and then baked at 350 degrees until soft, about 1 ½ hour. They can be served this way with butter, or mashed, or made into a pureed soup with broth and cream or yogurt. They can also be diced and cooked with apples, greens, onion and diced pork in a broth made with apple cider (hard or soft).

Tomatoes are often used raw in salads and salsas, stewed or made into sauces, or added to soups and stews. They can be brushed with oil and sprinkled with sugar and baked in an oiled baking dish or pie plate at 300 degrees for about an hour, and served as a side dish.

Turnips can be peeled and diced and cooked in butter and a touch of sugar. They can also be cooked and mashed or roasted. They are quite tasty and a good substitute for potatoes. They can also be added to soups and stews. Save the skins for broth.

Fried vegetable patties Leftover vegetables or fresh vegetables can be used to make fried patties. Mix 2 cups of vegetables (either mashed cooked veggies or shredded fresh veggies) with sliced onion, 2 eggs and ½ cup flour. Drop into a pan with 2 tablespoons of butter and 2 tablespoons olive oil heated in it, and press flat. Cook until golden on both sides. Vegetables you can use for these include potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips, parsnips, carrots, and zucchini.

Breakfast

Breakfast is often overlooked for many adults, and given to children in the form of cheap, nutritionally deficient boxed cereals, but it is truly the most important meal of the day, and worth putting a bit of effort into. Scrambled eggs are quick to make, and can be dressed up with vegetables, cheese, or salsa. Consider adding sausage or ham to the frying pan, pre-sliced to save time and shorten cooking length, or use ground unshaped breakfast sausage or chorizo (remove the plastic tube first!).

Yogurt or cottage cheese, served with fruit, pumpkin or sunflower seeds and a touch of honey is a good and quick option. It is better, less wasteful and cheaper to buy a large container of plain full-fat yogurt than the overly sweetened flavored single serving containers.

Whole grains, like brown rice, quinoa or oatmeal can be presoaked or cooked overnight in a crockpot and flavored with fresh or dried fruit, cinnamon and honey. It may be worthwhile to bake a batch of breakfast muffins to have on hand. These can be

made with whole wheat and yogurt and filled with fruit. Consider your meal plan. If you are baking a dish for dinner one night, could you bake a batch of muffins or fruit bread at the same time? This could be used for the next day or two, or frozen until needed, and can help save on electricity.

Bread that is becoming dried out can be used to make French toast. You can used pre-sliced bread or chunks of French bread. Heat some butter in a frying pan. In a bowl whisk together an egg and ¼ cup milk with a ¼ teaspoon of vanilla extract. In this, dunk 2 slices of bread, or an equivalent amount of chunks. Fry until slightly crispy on the bottom and flip. This can be served with fruit, yogurt and a touch of sweetener.

An occasional bowl of cold cereal is ok, but it shouldn't be the mainstay of anyone's breakfast. Look for types with whole grains and a low amount of sugar (raisin bran or some granola types are good) and consider adding fresh fruit or a dollop of yogurt to the bowl. Stock up when on sale, and avoid the brightly colored sugary stuff marketed to children. It is expensive and bad for them, and us.

Lunches

Many of us work or are in school during lunchtime. Too often this means resorting to fast food, cheap snacks or cafeteria food of questionable quality for our midday meals. A good quality reusable lunch kit can be a wise investment for adults of children. Look for models with separate containers for different food items, a carrying bag and room for an ice pack. If your work has a refrigerator for employee use, keep a loaf of whole grain bread, lunch meats, spreads or cheese and peanut butter in there. Bring some fruits or vegetables to snack on. A squeeze of lemon juice and a dash of salt and chile powder can add pep to melon, cucumbers, cantaloupe, mango, apple or pineapple. For kids, simple sandwiches are good, as are leftovers from dinner, cold noodle dishes, salads, and fresh veggies like carrots, celery, bell pepper, or radishes with peanut butter or ranch dressing to dip. Yogurt, cheese or boiled eggs are good snacks that kids tend to enjoy. If you are using soft spreads like tuna or chicken salad, or hummus, consider packing the bread and the spread separately to keep the bread from becoming soggy.

On The Go

When we are traveling, whether on a long car trip, or just getting to and from work or school, it can be challenging to maintain a healthy diet. Fast food is very convenient, but can become quite expensive. It is also generally not very good for us, especially as an everyday meal. Here are some ideas to lower costs and improve healthy eating while on the road.

Prepare

If you know you will be in a car for most of the day, it is wise to have food prepared for your journey. A small cooler and a large thermos or glass bottle are useful things to have. Use a large glass bottle to keep water in, possibly flavored with lemon or mint. Salads, cheese, burritos and sandwiches can be kept in a small cooler. Fruit, vegetables such as whole carrots, radishes and celery (with a jar of peanut butter, perhaps), nuts and bread can be brought in a tote bag and do not require much equipment to eat.

Purchasing Food

When it is necessary to purchase food while traveling, it can help to be mindful of what you buy. At fast food places, stick to foods that are as simple as possible. I find a vegetarian burrito to be more digestible than the ground meat options. You may find grilled chicken options to be somewhat healthier than breaded and fried patties, and wraps to have fewer carbs and more vegetables than sandwiches on buns. It is not necessary to overload on French fries and massive soft drinks. Water, or unsweetened iced tea are good sugarless options for drinks, as is unflavored milk for children. Some fast food chains are beginning to respond to the demand for better food choices, especially for children, so read the menu carefully and let restaurants know what they are doing right or wrong.

At gas stations, options for food are fairly limited. It is better to stick to water, unsweetened teas and milk for beverages. Juice is ok in small amounts, but even varieties with no added sugar or corn syrup are very high in carbs, with none of the fiber present in a whole piece of fruit to aid in healthy digestion. Nuts, fruit, plain varieties of potato or tortilla chips, cheese, bread and peanut butter are pretty good, as are burritos. If you can, find southwestern style beef jerky (*carne seca*) or other types of dried meat made with minimal ingredients. Most commercial beef jerky is loaded with preservatives and artificial sweeteners and flavoring agents.

Taking it further: canning, dehydrating, making your own yogurt or probiotic drinks, raising chickens for eggs. DIY ice cream

First Steps to a Better Diet

Change is difficult. It requires sustained effort to keep going after an initial burst of enthusiasm. It requires stepping outside of the comfortable habits of our past routines. Current First-world society is structured around the minimization of effort and the ease with which the basest human needs can be satisfied, at the basest possible level. In such a climate, any striving towards improvement or reaching beyond the bare minimum will set a person outside of the norm. It's ok. This is a physical lesson in the process of

individuation, taking control of your body and choices, and reforging the link between body and soul. If you relapse into old habits, recognize it, acknowledge it and move on. Don't make excuses, but don't beat yourself up over it either.

Some initial steps to take. Look over them, identify which ones are most relevant to your current habits and needs, and start with those.

1 Stop drinking sodas, sugary coffee drinks, energy drinks and juice. A look at the carbohydrate content of any of these beverages will show that these sorts of drinks can make up more than a quarter of the daily recommended allowances. Four cans of soda can provided all the sugars recommended for the day, with no nutritional benefit. The problem is magnified in the case of children, whose bodies are smaller and need less than that recommended for an adult. Coffee beverages add an extra dose of non-nutritious fat, and are no different than a milkshake or sundae. Fruit juices, even if made from 100% juice provide a heavy dose of carbohydrates, with none of the nutritional benefits of the fibers of the fruit. Energy drinks can, in addition to the carb issue, overload the body with caffeine, or other herbal stimulants. Such stimulants need to be approached with caution and moderation. Herbal supplements are loosely regulated, and there is little information on how different herbal compounds interact with each other, or with other medications. Chemical sweeteners present their own array of problems, and taste gross anyway.

Make it a habit to carry water with you. Having water on hand will keep you hydrated and healthy, and fill you up, reducing hunger. Try adding mint leave, citrus fruit slices or cucumber slices to flavor your water, or making herbal teas, If you want, you can add a little honey or maple syrup. I prefer glass or metal to plastic, as a general rule. Shop around and see what works for you. Even a big glass Mason jar or reused juice bottle will work.

If you need your coffee, make a big batch at home and take it with you for work. Reducing or eliminating the amount of sugar in your coffee is a good step to take.

For special occasions, a mixture of sparkling water or ginger ale and fruit juice makes a nice, less-sweet drink. You can add slices of fruit or whole berries, or a touch of cream for a cream-soda type drink (not with citrus fruits!). For festive winter occasions, apple, pear or white grape juices or ciders, warmed with spices (cinnamon, clove, ginger, nutmeg) can be made. A small mug, slowly sipped should be sufficient. You can also make homemade hot cocoa with equal parts (or to your liking) of water and milk, with cocoa powder and a little sugar. Heat this mixture on a low-medium fire, stiffing continuously until hot (not boiling). You can flavor this with mint, vanilla, coffee, or cinnamon, and homemade whipped cream. Again, small mugs are enough. Warm milk with cinnamon is also a nice winter drink.

I have been told, and personally observed, that recovering alcoholics often find

that they develop cravings for sugar in the form of candy or soda when they quit drinking. This leads me to suspect that a physical addiction to sugar is one aspect of alcohol addiction. For the recovering alcoholic, soda or candy is certainly preferable to alcohol, but I would encourage an awareness of this possibility, and an attempt to minimize the craving and its impact (maybe one or two sodas or juices made with minimal chemicals and natural sugars per day, or a good quality chocolate bar a day, as opposed to endless massive sodas, and a big bag of candy.)

- 2. Portion control is a major key to losing weight and gaining control and awareness of our diets. The RDA (Recommended Daily Allowances) listed on food packaging are good guidelines to start from. We often eat much more than we need. Over time, a larger-than-necessary food intake will cause the stomach to expand its capacity, leaving us feeling hungry when we eat a more normal sized portion. To correct this pattern, it is necessary to eat smaller portions of food. Eventually the stomach can adjust and begin to contract to a more normal and healthy size. This will probably mean going through an adjustment period, during which you will feel hungry, but as long as you are eating healthy normal portions of food, this will pass. It can be helpful to change the proportions of food types on your plate. For example, you can increase the amounts of vegetables or whole grains on your plate and fill up on more of those. Drinking more water can help you feel fuller. As with so many things, moderation is the key. You do not need to become unhealthily obsessive about portion sizes, going to extremes of too much or too little. Persons with a history of eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia must be very careful not to allow dietary awareness slip into a pathological destructive mindset. A therapist who is supportive of the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle may be a useful ally to enlist if this is a concern for you.
- 3. Replace heavily chemically flavored or sugary snacks with better options. Plain tortilla chips with salsa are tasty and better than bright orange fake cheese puffs loaded with dyes and chemical flavorings. There are vegetable chips on the market that are quite tasty. Fresh fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, nuts, a few slices of cheese or a small cup of cottage cheese or yogurt make good snacks. As a rule of thumb, look for products with these least amount of ingredients, and make sure that the ingredients they do contain are recognizable as food, not preservatives and chemical additives.
- 4. Avoid eating out of boredom. If you find yourself snacking at certain times (a lull in the workday, while watching TV, ect), consider whether there is something else you could be doing (a craft, stretching, making a to-do list, tidying your desk), or perhaps whether now might be a good time to do nothing but enjoy the quiet, perhaps meditate or practice some deep breathing exercises, take a little time to go inward and clear your mind. The primary purpose of food is to nourish our bodies, not to entertain and stimulate
- 5. Make breakfast a proper meal. The old adage about breakfast being the most important meal of the day still has value today, even if most people are not getting

up early to work hard in the fields. We still have our jobs and duties to tend to, children still have to go to school and be able to focus. Skipping breakfast is detrimental to physical health and impacts the ability to focus on work and maintain a good temper and mindset. A good breakfast can consist of whole grains with dairy and fruit, yogurt with fruit and nuts or seeds, or eggs with toast. A larger breakfast can have meats (bacon, ham or good-quality breakfast sausage), potatoes or whole grain muffins or pancakes added. The basic idea is to make the breakfast meal consist of more protein and little to no empty carbs. Just about all cold breakfast cereal consists of dehydrated grain slurry that has had all nutritional content removed in order to increase its shelf life. The tasteless results are made palatable with the addition of sugars and artificial flavorings. A whole grain granola is ok as a garnish for yogurt, but does not really make a great meal in and of itself. A good breakfast will make it easier to avoid bingeing on too much food at lunch, or snacking too much throughout the day.

- 6. Saving money by eating/prepping food at home. Restaurant food is expensive and often not of the best quality, loaded with preservatives, sugars and flavoring agents. Preparing food and eating with friends and family is a wonderful way to build bonds of frith and friendship, and share the simple pleasures and joys of life. Preparing meals to take to work, or for children to take to school ensures that the people in your family are well cared for and have the fuel they need to get through the day, prepared lovingly and with thought and care. A good quality lunch box system can last for years, and save money otherwise spent on fast food. School lunches, while cheap or sometimes free through state programs, are generally of quite poor quality and taste. It is not necessary to make a lunchbox into a work or art. Plain wholesome foods (whole grain breads, meats, cheeses, salads, cold noodle or grain dishes, fresh vegetables fruits and nuts) are best. It doesn't need to look pretty for Pinterest, it needs to be tasty and nourishing.
- 7. Make reading labels a habit. Food producers are required by law to provide information on the food they sell. You will generally see a chart with the Recommended Daily Allowances of fats, sugars, carbohydrate, protein, vitamins and minerals and the serving size, as well as a list of the ingredients used to make the product. If a product is labeled as organic, it must be certified as such. There is a movement to require that foods be labeled as genetically-modified. Many companied will voluntarily label their food as GMO-free. I believe correct labeling of food is a very important practice that must be upheld, and would urge people to be aware of lobbies to deregulate food labeling and oppose them whenever they are proposed.

The serving size is what is considered an appropriate among of the food product to be consumed at one sitting for an average sized adult. Often this is surprisingly less than what people usually consume. Awareness of serving sizes can be very useful when seeking to reduce food portions. Bear in mind that there may be some variance regarding appropriate serving sizes. (A child will require less of some things, especially sugars, while a large and/or active person may require a bit more.

The Recommended Daily Allowance chart indicates how much fat (saturated and trans fats, as well as total), cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates (total, and sourced

from fiber and sugars), vitamin A and C, iron, calcium, and protein is provided in one serving size, and what percentage of the total amount of the recommended nutrient per day. Again, these recommendations are based on average adult needs and can vary based on the size of a person. This does not mean an overweight person should eat more of these things; rather a man who is 6'3" will probably need more nutrients in different proportions to a 5'2" woman. Likewise, children, pregnant women and those on medically-approved special diets will have different needs.

In addition to this information, the label will have a list of ingredients. This list starts with the ingredient that makes up the largest proportion of the food's total content, and goes down proportionally. It is a good rule of thumb to look for foods that have fewer ingredients, as well as ingredients that are easily recognizable as food. Beware of foods that contain sweeteners (sugar, corn syrup, fructose, dextrose) as one of the first few ingredients. You will probably find that many prepared or instant foods (canned goods, condiments, salad dressings, cereals, juices) contain surprising amounts of sugar and salt. This is done to inexpensively aid in the preservation of the food, and to improve the taste, but at a great cost to health, especially for low-income people.

- 8. Be wary of gimmicks and overly fussy food trends. It is easy, especially in the initial burst of enthusiasm for a change in lifestyle, to succumb to one or another of the various trends and fads in diet. It may be a case of going overboard on spending on foods labeled "organic" or "natural", adopting a full vegan (or paleo, Atkins or whatnot) diet overnight, or looking to one specific food to be a miracle cure. While there is probably something of value to many of these ideas, a fanatical adherence to them can be hard on the body, and the wallet. It is not going to benefit your family to spend hundreds of dollars on fad foods that will not last out the week, It is also possible to become overly neurotic about issues like food "purity", to the point where one's attitude to food resembles an eating disorder, A better approach would be to make notes on you and your families' eating habits and identify areas for improvement. Do you spend too much on eating at restaurants? Do you buy too many unhealthy snack foods that could be replaced by healthier things? Are your meals unbalanced? Start with your problem areas and expand from there. Fortunately, we a living in a time when more and more food producers and grocery chains are expanding their product lines to include more healthy options, including foods with less sugar and organic options. It is not necessary to spend tons of money at health food specialty stores to have a healthy, wholesome and balanced diet.
- 9. Make and keep realistic goals regarding fitness and weight loss. If you are going from a sedentary lifestyle to a healthier one, do not expect dramatic overnight results. The body needs time to adjust to new modes of being. Be forgiving of yourself, but don't make excuses. If you slip into old patterns, recognize it and start over. Don't slip into the mindset of "Well I had a little more candy than I should have, I've wrecked my diet, so I might as well eat a tub of ice cream." But don't beat yourself up about it, and starve yourself to "make up for it." And be patient. Weight loss can take time. If you are trying to lose a significant amount of

weight, you must also be aware of the fact that dropping the weight by itself will not necessarily make you look like a chiseled swimsuit model. You will also need to exercise (both an aerobic type of exercise, whether walking, jogging, dancing, swimming, ect.) and something to develop muscle tone (weightlifting or isotonic exercises like yoga or pilates that work with the weight of the body). You will also need to consider the problem of excess skin and stretch marks. Caring for the skin with vitamin rich lotions, massaged firmly into the skin on a daily basis, good nourishing foods and cold showers can help tremendously, but for extreme cases, surgery may be necessary to remove excess skin. Age is also a factor in skin resiliency. However, the rewards of achiving a healthy weight go beyond, magazine ready looks. Your joints, heart, lungs and other organs will thank you, and your renewed vitality will be beneficial to you and your loved ones.

10. Eating locally and eating for our body type. The concept of the "locavore", someone who seeks to eat mostly or only foods produced within a certain radius of where one lives, has been gaining traction in the last few years. There is much to be said for the concept, although getting 100% of your food this way is probably not realistic for most families. You may want to seek out farmer's markets, food co-ops, and farms where you can pick produce yourself for a fee. You can also seek out people in your area with surplus fruits and vegetables from their own gardens. This of course means that you must work within the natural growing cycle of foods in your area, and be prepared to freeze, can or otherwise store surplus foods. You may also want to consider doing a little gardening of your own. In urban areas, this concept may be more difficult, but there may be urban farming and gardening projects going on. Maybe you can start one of your own!

Humans have evolved to adapt to the foods in their ancestral regions. People of European or Near Eastern heritage have a genetic marker that enables them to digest milk more easily than people of East Asian or African heritage. Native American peoples have evolved to process a diet based on corn, New World vegetables and meat. Processed wheat and sugar based foods have been especially devastating to Native populations denied the ability to hunt, farm and fish in their traditional ways, and compelled to live on the cheap sugar and flour based offerings most easily available on some reservations. The other side of eating locally, in an age when many of us live far away from our ancestral homelands, is knowing about our bodies and the foods that nourish us, and finding a balance. All traditional foodways have a balance and value, both to the people that they are unique to and to those of us who seek to relearn what has been lost in the modern age of increasing globalization and homogeneity. These ideas tie into the larger concepts of reverence for our health, our bodies and our connection to the world around us. A greater awareness of who we are and how our choices affect the world around us can lead us to greater wisdom and a real sense of responsibility and reciprocity for the natural world. We depend on other people, animals, plants, and the water, air and soil for our continued existence. A healthy relationship with other beings heals our bodies and souls, and those around us. Likewise, ignorance, greed and irresponsibility poisons our interactions with the world, and our own selves as well. Our bodies are the manifestation of our ancestors struggles, the medium through which we experience the world, and the vehicle by which

we transmit something of ourselves and our experience into the future. To disconnect the body and the spirit, whether through destructive ideology (religious or secular), or through thoughtless hedonism, is to do violence to the body, the soul and the world around us.